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ABSTRACT

The concept of androgyny refers to the psychological wholeness of a person defined as the ability of an individual to identify with both masculine and feminine characteristics, depending on their appropriateness in various situations. This paper presents an overview of the construct of androgyny, describes the Bem Sex Role Inventory as a measure of psychological sex and suggests areas in communication research that would benefit from application of the androgyny perspective. Based on the conceptualization of masculinity and femininity as independent constructs, the Bem Sex Role Inventory is a 60 item self report test that rates personality characteristics on a seven point scale. Median split scoring is used to place individuals in eight categories of psychological sexuality. The paper advocates introducing the variable of personal psychological sex orientation identified through this inventory in the research areas of interpersonal relationships, interpersonal attraction, relational control patterns, self disclosure, interpersonal competency, and language study. (MAI)

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The Construct of Androgyny: An Overview and Implications for Research

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THE CONSTRUCT OF ANDROGYNY: AN OVERVIEW AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Communication researchers have typically operationally defined sex differences according to biological gender rather than psychological sex. The fact that a person is born with the genitals of one sex or another, scholars reason, is sufficient to initiate a socialization process whereby the person internalizes either male or female sex-role related behaviors. Recent schema of such stereotypical sex-role images for males and females (Baird, 1976; Key, 1975) report:

Males are: independent, assertive, aggressive, objective, courageous, innovation, etc.

Females are: dependent, non-competitive, passive, empathetic, subjective, etc.

However, mere anatomical differences between males and females do not provide sufficient justification for such stereotypes. Further, Greenblatt, Hasenauer, and Freimuth (1977) correctly contend that the use of biological sex as an antecendent variable in communication research is problematic. Operationally defining sex differences through gender unnecessarily, ". . . collapses all individual sex role identities into one or the other of the exclusive categories male and female" (Greenblatt, et al., 1977, 1). A more realistic approach to defining sex differences lies in the utilization of psychological sex and the construct of androgyny. As Patton, Jasnoski, and Skerchock (1977) write, "Consideration of androgyny as a possible variable can add precision to a researcher's ability to predict behaviors" (p. 3).

The purpose of this paper is threefold: (1) to present an

overview of the construct of androgyny, (2) to explicate the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) as a measure of psychological sex, and (3) to suggest viable avenues of research for communication scholars using the androgyny perspective.

OVERVIEW

The construct of androgyny is viewed from a psychological identity perspective. Succinctly, how one perceives significant others' and society's expectations of the sexes plays a significant part in determining the expressed roles of the individual. Androgyny has been defined by several social scientists as a type of sexual identity. Bakan (1966) defines androgyny via the concepts of agency, "libido," and communion, "eros," and advocates that both should be mitigated in the individual. Androgyny, thus, is equated with psychological wholeness.

In Jungian terms, androgyny is a search for a point of balance that unites the opposites, stabilizes the personality, and brings forth a sense of psychological wholeness (Bazin & Freeman, 1974). Thus, the concept of androgyny refers to: "(1) the complete person, that is, women who are assertive and men who are gentle; and, (2) a harmonious human community, the emblem of which is a just and natural marriage of woman and man" (Secord, 1974, 165). Perhaps most notable among social scientists studying androgyny is the work of Sandra Bem.

For Bem (1974), the word androgyny is best conceptualized by the two interrelated Greek root words "andro" meaning male and "gene" meaning female. Literally translated, androgyny means man-woman. Masculinity and femininity represent complementary domains

instead of competing characteristics of possible traits and behaviors, and it is possible for individuals to identity with both masculine and feminine characteristics depending on appropriateness to various situations.

Bem's conceptualization of androgyny challenges two widely held assumptions concerning sex-roles. First, Bem conceptualizes masculinity and femininity as independent constructs rather than opposite ends on a single, bi-polar, unidimensional construct. Bem rejects a once popular position that femininity is necessarily the opposite or absence of masculinity. Rather, femininity, reasons Bem, is an independent dimension just as is masculinity. Each dimension is replete with its own set of positive attributes. Bem, Martyna, and Watson (1976) contend that this conceptualization allows the feminine and masculine characteristics to complement and temper one another.

Second, Bem questions the assumption that gender appropriate sex-role socialization enhances one's psychological or social adjustment. Traditionally, social scientists have promoted association with "appropriate" sex-role stereotypes as good and desirable. Mussen (1969) goes so far as to suggest that it is a parent's duty to promulgate sex-role stereotypes. However, literature reviews (such as Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974) have concluded that many sex-role behaviors are no longer appropriate. In fact, some traditional sex-determined behaviors have been related to negative consequences in personality development (Slater, 1961), marital harmony (Komarovsky, 1967), level of achievement and motivation (Stein & Smithless, 1969), and problem solving performance (Carey, 1958). Mussen (1961)

and Harford, Willis, and Deabler (1967) report that high masculinity correlates with poor psychological adjustment in adult men. High masculine men were found to be less dominant, self-assured, and self-acceptant than low masculine men. While high masculinity may be beneficial to boys in adolescence it becomes a handicap as the boy matures into adulthood (Mussen, 1961). Similarly, studies of femininity consistently demonstrate that a high degree of sex-typing contributes to poor psychological adjustment in girls and women (Gall, 1969; Sears, 1970; Webb, 1963). Thus, the old proposition that it is more advantageous for males and females to retain traditional sex-role identities has not proved accurate. Instead, such identities have been found to cause internal conflicts and be incompatable with both the individual's and society's interests (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972).

Bem's research concentrates on clarifying the behavioral consequences of sex-typing. Bem's primary hypothesis (Bem, 1975) is that a non-androgynous self-concept promotes greater behavioral restrictions than an androgynous one. Bem reasons that sex-typed persons are motivated to keep their behavior consistent with the internalized sex-role stereotype. That is, masculine individuals are expected to engage in masculine behaviors only, and, thus, will refuse to engage in sex-inappropriate (feminine) behavior (Kagan, 1964; Kohlberg, 1966). However, the androgynous individual who is not motivated to restrict their behavior to sex-appropriate acts, is expected to be more flexible and responsive to the demands of different situations. Clearly, Bem's hypothesis suggests one's personality is less trait bound and more context specific.

In essence, androgynous people have maximal behavioral flexibility because of their diversified exposure, perceptual sensitivity to a variety of experiences, and psychological freedom.

BEM SEX ROLE INVENTORY (BSRI)

Examination of an individual's sexual identity allows the tapping of one's psychological orientation toward male and female sex-roles. Viewing sexual identity as a perceptual awareness and allowing for the identification of androgyny, Bem (1974) provides the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI).

The BSRI is a Likert-type sixty-item paper and pencil self-report measure of masculinity and femininity. The sixty items reference personality characteristics — twenty masculine attributes, twenty feminine attributes, and twenty neutral attributes. (See Appendix A). Respondents complete a seven-point scale for each item ranging from 1(never or almost never true of me) to 7 (always or almost always true of me).

Unlike previous instruments, the BSRI contains independent masculinity and femininity scales which were selected on the basis of sex-typed social desirability rather than on the basis of endorsement by males and females. Specifically, Bem (1974) generated a pool of 400 adjectives which were thought to be positive in value and either masculine or feminine (200 adjectives each) which were submitted to 100 judges (50 males and 50 females). The judges were asked to rate the adjectives in terms of their desirability for a man or a woman in American society. An item was labeled feminine if both male and female judges indicated the item to be significantly more desirable for a woman than a man. Similarly, an

item was categorized masculine if it was rated by both male and female judges as more desirable for a man than a woman. An item was labeled neutral if it was rated by male and female judges as no more desirable for a man than a woman. Bem's (1974) instrument has demonstrated high internal consistency, discriminant validity, test-retest reliability, and convergent validity when compared to other measures of masculinity and femininity.

The primary method for scoring the BSRI is the median split. The researcher determines the mean self-rating for all endorsed masculine and feminine items independently. Thus, all Ss have both a masculine (M) and feminine (F) score. Medians for the F and M scores are computed based on the total sample. Then, respondents are classfied according to whether their F and M scores are above or below each of the two medians. (See Figure 1). Respondents who score above one median but below the other are classified sex-typed or sex-reversed (masculine or feminine). Individuals scoring above the medians are androgynous. Individuals scoring below both medians are labeled undifferentiated. Thus, a person may be masculine (high association with masculine characteristics); feminine (high associating with feminine characteristics); androgynous (association with high degree of both masculine and feminine characteristics); or undifferentiated (association with a small degree of both masculine and feminine characteristics). When combined with traditional biological sex-typing, eight categories emerge: feminine female, masculine female, androgynous female, undifferentiated female, masculine male, feminine male, androgynous male, and undifferentiated male.

Figure 1

Femininity Score	Masculinty Score: Above Median	Masculinty Score: Below Median
Above Median	Androgynous	Feminine
Below Median	Masculine	Undifferentiated

As a variety of studies demonstrate, subjects' behaviors are consistent with their classification (Bem, 1974, 1975; Bem & Lenny, 1976) and androgynous subjects consistently show no preference for feminine or masculine activities (Bem, 1975), the BSRI appears to be a valid and reliable index of sexual identity.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

Research in interpersonal communication covers a variety of significant variables. Differences among the interactions of such variables according to sex traditionally follows biological differences. However, examining the sex variable from an identity perspective provides greater understanding and explanation as to how individuals see themselves and see their identities as reflected in their behavior. Following are examples of contributions an identity perspective can offer communication researchers.

Relational Control

Considerable communication research has centered, of late, on patterns of relational control in interpersonal relationships. This line of inquiry suggests that whenever individuals talk, the exchange of messages establishes a relationship between the two transactants.

Typically, these relationships are characterized as: (1) one-up (described as an attempt by an individual to establish relational control by structuring the communication transaction), (2) one-down (described as an attempt by one individual to relinquish control of the transaction and thus, assume a submissive stance), or (3) one-across (characterized by no attempt to control the transaction by either communicant).

In an exploratory study, Patton, Jasnoski, and Skerchock (1977) establish a credible relationship between biological sex, psychological sex, and relational control. The authors posit that biological sex alone is not enough to predict relational control as such products are the composite of both anatomical sex and individual belief systems (psychological sex).

Patton, et al. generate two hypotheses: (1) sex-typed females will engage in significantly more submissive (one-down) acts than either sex-typed males or androgynous individuals, and (2) sex-typed males will engage in significantly more controlling (one-up) acts than will sex-typed females or androgynous individuals. Ss were classified as masculine, feminine, or androgynous by the BSRI and assigned to one of four task-oriented small group discussions (sex-typed females, sex-typed males, androgynous, and mixed). Results demonstrate that sex-typed males and sex-typed females engage in stereotypic relational control behaviors as predicted. Androgynous groups (composed of males and females) did not establish consistent relational control patterns. Although the authors do not directly test for differences between gender identity and psychological sexual identity, these findings do

provide preliminary support for the belief that psychological sex, not gender, accounts for relational control patterns. While the study was well conceived and executed with rigor, some suggestions for future research can be deduced.

Utilization of three member task oriented discussion groups limits generalizability to small group encounters rather than interpersonal transactions with the triadic format probably confounding the results. The authors do not report if the Ss knew one another before meetings as groups or if zero history groups were in fact established. If Ss were acquainted before the experiment, previous relational control patterns may have influenced the results reported. If the groups were zero history in composition, the results may reflect attempts to orient group members to one another and the task rather than the establishment of lasting interpersonal relational control patterns. It would have been interesting to examine relational control patterns across topics of discussion and in subsequent group meetings. It would also be informative to vary the nature of the discussion task. Patton, et al. did not ascertain the sex-type of the task. On face, the task (deciding what items representing our culture are to be sent to Mars) appears to be masculine, i. e. the task requires Ss to exercise logical, deductive, non-emotional, analytical skills. One might question, how will relational control patterns differ if the task is defined as predominantly feminine or even neutral? Future research concentrating on two-person dyads controlling for prior acquaintance, type of task, and relational longevity would add considerable knowledge to the relationship between biological

sex, psychological sex, and relational control.

In a more recent and comprehensive study of the relationship between biological sex, psychological sex, and verbal and nonverbal determinants of dominance, Putnam and Skerchock (1978) predict: (1) sex-type males will exhibit more verbal and nonverbal control behaviors, certainty responses, and superiority behavior than will sex-typed females, (2) sex-type females will employ more deference behaviors, indecisive-insecure responses, and approval-seeking behaviors than will sex-type males, and (3) androgynous subjects will vary their verbal and nonverbal cues to fit the task demands and communication style of their partners. Unlike the earlier Patton, et al. study, the Putnam and Skerchock study concentrates on dyadic communication situations and utilizes both masculine and feminine tasks. Findings relative to relational control do not support the traditional prediction that sex-type males control transactions through frequency and duration of talk. Rather, results suggest a link between sex-role communication behaviors, dyadic partners, and task type; sex-type males seemingly speak more frequently on masculine topics with sex-type female partners. Androgynous subjects tend to speak for longer duration on feminine tasks and the authors conclude, ". . . results of this study support the contention that communicative behaviors are too complex for neat predictions of differences between males and females" (p. 2).

Acknowledging the complexity of communication perceptions of self and other, greater understanding could be gained through an identity perspective instead of mere dichotomous classification

according to gender. Indeed, future research on relational control patterns should consider gender, psychological sex, and type of discussion topic as contributing variables. The contingency model proposed by Putnam and Skerchock (1978) warrants the continued attention of communication scholars as a method of achieving just that.

Interpersonal Attraction

Research concerned with interpersonal attraction can also benefit from consideration of psychological sex as an important contributing variable. Leibowitz, Bochner, Rawlins, and Eagle (1977) have examined patterns of exchange and attraction in close, equal and unequal friendships. Following an excellent delineation of friend relationship types, the authors compare best friendships with equal, one-up and one-down friendships and compare one-up with one-down friendships across a vector of related sources of attraction and exchange in enduring relationships. The study reports that Ss in the one-down position rate the person in the one-up position as being physically attractive.

Two explanations for this result are presented: (1) a person who likes another more than she/he is liked may inflate her/his interpretation of the other's attractiveness, or (2) a person may be led to believe they are in the one-down position because the other is perceived as more attractive. In their closing remarks, the authors suggest:

> Although we do have the data, we have not yet had an opportunity to evaluate the impact of gender differences on the ratings of these friendship categories. Same-sex and opposite-sex friendships ought to produce different patterns of responses, particularly in terms of intimacy, physical attractiveness, and ego support.

> Gender would also influence the perceptions of unequal as compared to equal friendships (p. 15).

Borrowing from the earlier discussion of a contingency model of relational control, it is important that this line of research also consider psychological sex. Note that Leibowitz, et al. (1977) suggest that gender might account for different patterns of responses. It would be advantageous to consider the impact of biological and psychological sex together. As previously discussed, it is reasonable to posit that biological sex and psychological sex will have differential effects on intimacy, physical attractiveness, and ego support. Certainly, Putnam and Skerchock's (1978) research indicates equal and unequal relationships are influenced by the psychological sex of both communicants.

Similarly, a more recent study of interpersonal attraction by Miller (1978) could also benefit from consideration of the psychological sex variable. Miller's study explores attraction and communication style as perceptual differences between friends and enemies as a function of sex and race. While no hypotheses were advanced, a portion of Miller's research concerns determining if significant sex and/or race related differences between perceptions of attraction and communicator style for one's best male and best female friend and worst male and worst female acquaintance exist. Miller reports:

> The data revealed no major sex related differences, except that males and females are more attracted to opposite sex friends than to same sex friends. In other words, males and females assess their friends and enemies in about the same way with respect to attraction and communicator style (p. 13).

While there are no reasons to doubt Miller's research, the dimension of psychological sex is not addressed in this study. Like the Leibowitz, et al. (1977) study, it is reasonable to assume in Miller's study that consideration of such a variable would affect perceptions of attraction and social interaction. For example, it is known that androgynous females report less communication apprehension than sex-type females (Greenblatt, et al., 1977) and that androgynous individuals demonstrate higher levels of self-esteem, self-acceptance, and acceptance of others (Eman & Morse, 1977) than do sex-typed and undifferentiated individuals. Such findings suggest the psychological sex variable is an intervening force affecting communication patterns. Certainly, such results compel communication researchers interested in interpersonal attraction to consider psychological sex.

Self-Disclosure

Considerable research reports sex differences in self-disclosure behavior. Results are generally contradictory and do not yield a clear picture of disclosure behavior. Greenblatt, et al. (1977) have compiled a thorough review of previous sex difference self-disclosure literature and suggest that contradictions in previous research are primarily due to the utilization of biological sex to classify subjects. The authors hypothesize that psychological sex is a more precise predictor of self-disclosure than biological sex. Overall, this prediction was confirmed. Feminine and androgynous females and androgynous males tended to report the highest total disclosure. Masculine males reported the least. Further, Greenblatt, et al. report people tend to find cross-situational

disclosure to females more appropriate than disclosure to a male. Unfortunately, the study does not consider the positiveness or negativeness (valence) of the disclosure.

Earlier, Gilbett and Horenstein (1975) examine the relationship between level of disclosure (degree of intimacy), valence of disclosure (whether the Ss disclosed positive attributes about themselves or negative deficiencies, about themsleves), biological sex and interpersonal attraction. Results demonstrate that all Ss show higher attraction scores for the positive disclosing confederate, regardless of the sex of the subject or the degree of intimacy. Whereas the Greenblatt, et al. study did not consider the valence of disclosure, the Gilbert and Horenstein study did not consider psychological sex. Combining both studies, communication researchers could benefit from an investigation of the relationship between psychological sex, biological sex, level of disclosure, valence of disclosure, and degree of interpersonal attraction.

Interpersonal Competency

An area plaguing numerous communication researchers has centered around the skills and traits that contribute to some individuals being better communicators than others. Interpersonal competency defined as a "person's ability to interact effectively with other people" (Bochner & Kelly, 1974, 288), provides a focal point of such a discussion. While no direct research demonstrates sexual identity as the key variable in interpersonal competency, some past findings lend support for the psychological sex variable as an important intervening contributor.

Eman and Morse (1977) report androgynous individuals as

highest in self-esteem, self-acceptance, and acceptance of others which could contribute to interpersonal competency. Such a conclusion is clearly explained in light of the conceptualization of androgyny. Androgyny is associated with psychological freedom which allows the flexibility to like oneself and others. The description of the interpersonal competent communicator as one who "has a large enough behavioral repertoire to allow him to meet demands of changing situations and is supportive of faces and lines his fellow interactants present" (Wiemann, 1977, 196), is also descriptive of the androgynous individual.

Behavioral flexibility (Bochner & Kelly, 1974) and adaptiveness (Heath, 1977) are seen as key contributors to interpersonal competency. Eman (1977) reports androgynous individuals are most capable of adapting their language to situations. Although continued validation of the content analysis category system used to measure language is needed, such results do suggest that the psychological sex variable is an important contributor to potential interpersonal competency. Before generalizations can be made, elements of interpersonal competency need to be examined in relation to sexual identity. Does the androgynous identity express higher levels of elements necessary to becoming interpersonal competent, such as empathy, self-disclosure, and role-taking abilities? Answers to such questions can help provide a better understanding of this area of research.

Language

That a person is revealed by their speech has long been recognized. "The verbal style of the individual serves as a

vehicle for and indicator of his personality style" (Hertzler, 1965, 407). Differences in language according to gender are widely publicized, and often this research assumes that language is classified as male or female, forcing a dichotomous separation. However, Hirschman (1974) notes that dividing language into either male or female categories is no longer feasible. Instead he suggests that "the distinction between 'assertive behavior,' more associated with men, and 'supportive behavior,' traditionally associated with women, are not to be understood as opposites in any sense; ideally it would be possible to be simultaneously assertive and supportive" (p. 2). Language can thus be identified according to degrees of masculinity, femininity, and any combination thereof based on individuals' experiences and perceptual orientation. Patton and Eman (1978) suggest that language can be examined from an androgynous perspective just as one's identity can, thus, allowing the researcher more of an opportunity to examine language as an expression one's view of reality.

CONCLUSION

While this paper does not purport to have covered all important variables in communication, it does stress the significance of examining the nature of psychological sex. Dichotomous biological classification tells us little about why people think and behave as they do. The present authors strongly suggest that by looking at one's psychological orientation toward their sex will allow us to better understand such variables as relational control, interpersonal attraction, self-disclosure, interpersonal competency, and language. Inclusion of such an emphasis provides a greater understanding of people's behaviors.

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Appendix A

Items On The Masculinity, Femininity, and Neutral Scales of the Bem Sex Role Inventory

Masculine Items	Feminine Items	Neutral Items
Acts as a leader	Affectionate	Adaptable
Aggressive	Cheerful	Conceited
Ambitious	Childlike	Conscientious
Analytical	Compassionate	Conventional
Assertive	Does not use harsh language	Friendly
Athletic	Eager to soothe hurt feelings	Happy
Competitive	Feminine	Helpful
Defends own beliefs	Flatterable	Inefficient
Dominant	Gentle	Jealous
Forceful	Gullible	Likable
Has leadership abilities	Loves children	Moody
Independent	Loyal	Reliable
Individualistic	Sensitive to the needs of others	Secretive
Makes decisions easily	Shy	Sincere
Masculine	Soft spoken	Solemn
Self reliant	Sympathetic	Tactful
Self-sufficient	Tender	Theatrical
Strong Personality	Understanding	Truthful
Willing to take a stand	Warm	Unpredictable
Willing to take risks	Yielding	Unsystematic

Note: This table was taken from: Watson, C., "The Conceptualization and Measurement of Psychological Androgyny." SCA paper, Washington, 1977.